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SUBJECT: LON NOL'S VIEWS OF CURRENT MILITARY SITUATION

1. ON THE AFTERNOON OF DECEMBER 9 THE POL/MIL COUNSELOR HAD AN UNEXPECTED TWO-HOUR MEETING WITH GEN LON NOL. PRESENT WERE GEN LON NOL, GEN SAK SUTSAKHAN, LTC BONNER AND MR. LADD. GEN SIRIK BATAK JOINED THE GROUP DURING THE LAST FEW MINUTES OF THE MEETING.
2. AFTER USUAL PLEASANTRIES, GEN LON NOL OPENED THE DISCUSSION WITH A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESENT FANK FORCE FROM 50,000 MEN TO ITS PRESENT STRENGTH OF 154,000. HE COMMENTED UPON FANK'S EARLY WEAKNESSES AND RELATED THAT TIME TO THE PRESENT SITUATION OF COMPARATIVE STRENGTH IN MANPOWER AND ABILITY TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST THE ENEMY. HE ATTRIBUTED MUCH OF FANK'S PRESENT MORE FAVORABLE POSITION TO THE U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE'S DETERMINATION.
3. LON NOL THEN ADDRESSED THE PRESENT SITUATION. HIS VIEW SEEMED TO BE THAT IN SPITE OF TEMPORARY ENEMY SUCCESSES, THE FANK FORCES WOULD HOLD FAST AND SUCCEED IN REESTABLISHING THE LOCs AND ENHANCING THEIR OWN DEFENSIVE POSITION. HE COMMENTED THAT IN MAY, JUNE AND JULY THE ENEMY HAD THE INITIATIVE WHILE IN AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER FANK HAD TAKEN THE INITIATIVE. HE SEEMS TO RECOGNIZE THAT AT THIS TIME THE ENEMY AGAIN HAS THE INITIATIVE BUT HE

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BELIEVES THAT IT IS TEMPORARY AND THAT IT CAN BE RESTORED TO FANK. HE THEN STATED THAT AFTER HE BUILDS A BASE AT KOMPONG THMAR, HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO DEFEND AGAINST ANY ENEMY PRESSURE ALONG THE LINE SIEM REAP, KOMPONG THOM, KOMPONG THMAR, KOMPONG CHAM.

4. HE THEN ASKED THAT WHATEVER POSSIBLE BE DONE TO EXPEDITE THE MAINTENANCE WORK BEING DONE ON THE FIVE HELICOPTERS NOW IN VIETNAM. HE WAS ADVISED ORDERS HAD ALREADY BEEN ISSUED BY COMUSMACV TO GIVE THE CAMBODIAN HELICOPTERS TOP PRIORITY IN MAINTENANCE WORK. HE THEN ASKED IF SOME ARRANGEMENT COULD BE MADE TO MAINTAIN THE HELICOPTERS ON AN EXCHANGE BASIS - IN EFFECT, WHEN TWO HELICOPTERS ARE SENT TO SVN FOR MAINTENANCE, COULD TWO BE SENT TO REPLACE THEM SO THAT SIX WOULD ALWAYS BE AVAILABLE TO FANK. AT THE PRESENT TIME, FIVE OF THE SIX ARE IN SVN FOR MAINTENANCE AND SINCE THE VIETNAMESE WILL NOT FLY SINGLE HELICOPTER MISSIONS, NONE IS AVAILABLE HERE FOR CAMBODIAN USE.

5. LON NOL STATED WITH CONSIDERABLE FEELING THAT HE WAS MOST ANXIOUS TO VISIT THE TROOPS AND COMMANDERS ALONG THE ROUTE 7 FRONT BUT HE HAD NO ADEQUATE MEANS OF GETTING THERE. BOTH LADD AND BONNER WERE IMPRESSED WITH THE GENERAL'S APPARENT SINCERITY IN THIS MATTER. HE ALSO STATED HE NEEDED THIS HELICOPTER SUPPORT FOR EVACUATION OF WOUNDED.

6. LON NOL THEN ADDRESSED THE REQUIREMENT TO DEVELOP MORE EFFECTIVE "MANEUVER FORCES" AND THE NEED FOR COMMAND AND CONTROL MECHANISMS. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE PRESENT SYSTEM, IN WHICH MILITARY REGION COMMANDERS HAVE BOTH TERRITORIAL AND TACTICAL MISSIONS, CAUSED PROBLEMS OF TROOP DEPLOYMENTS. THIS LED INTO A DISCUSSION OF THE NEED FOR "PROVISIONAL DIVISIONS" WHICH COULD BE GIVEN SPECIFIC MISSIONS TARGETED AGAINST ENEMY UNITS RATHER THAN RELIANCE UPON THE FORCES OF REGIONAL COMMANDERS WHO ARE INCLINED TO UTILIZE ALL RESOURCES MADE AVAILABLE TO THEM TO PROTECT TERRITORY UNDER THEIR CONTROL. LON NOL ASKED IF THE FORCE STRUCTURE PLANNING OF THE US ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WAS FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO ACCOMMODATE THIS "PROVISIONAL DIVISION" CONCEPT. THE POL/MIL COUNSELOR TOLD HIM IT PROBABLY COULD BE DONE AS THE PROGRAM INCLUDED BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS ORGANIZATIONS WHICH COULD BE ADJUSTED TO SKELETON LIGHT DIVISION HEADQUARTERS. IT WAS MADE CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT CONSIDERATION OF THIS CONCEPT WOULD BE BASED ON COMMAND AND CONTROL OF LIGHT INFANTRY FORCES AND NOT UPON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLASSIC DIVISIONS WITH MASSIVE LOGISTIC, ADMINISTRATIVE AND COMBAT SUPPORT BACK-UP UNITS. ALTHOUGH LON NOL DID

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PAGE 03 PHNOM 03348 100615Z

SLIGHTLY WINCE AND HINT AT ARTILLERY AND ARMOR, HE GENERALLY CONCURRED THAT THE COMMAND AND CONTROL FACTOR WAS WHAT HE HAD IN MIND AND NEEDED.

7. THE CONVERSATION NEXT TURNED TO THE PRESENT SITUATION. LON NOL STATED HE HAD ASKED THE VIETNAMESE FOR IMMEDIATE GROUND FORCE AND HELICOPTER ASSISTANCE ASSOCIATED WITH THE SITUATIONS ALONG ROUTE 7 AND 4. HE STATED THAT HE HAD BEEN TURNED DOWN IN BOTH INSTANCES. HE SAID THAT ON 9 DECEMBER HE ASKED THE VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR FOR HELICOPTER ASSISTANCE TO RETAKE THE HILL BLOCKING MOVEMENT ON ROUTE 6 AT PREY BATHEAY. HE REQUESTED THAT MACV BE INFORMED OF THIS LATEST REQUEST TO THE GVN. IF THE VIETNAMESE DO NOT RESPOND, HE SAID HE WILL TRY TO TAKE THE HILL WITHOUT THEIR ASSISTANCE. HE FEELS THAT IF HE CAN RETAKE THIS CRITICAL TERRAIN FEATURE, HE CAN THEN GO ON TO OPEN ROUTE 6 AND 7 IN A SYSTEMATIC MANNER.

8. THROUGHOUT THE MEETING LON NOL WAS RELAXED AND UNEMOTIONAL. HE APPEARED TO RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT BOTH THE FANK WEAKNESSES AND ENEMY STRENGTHS THAT WERE BROUGHT TO HIS ATTENTION. HE INDICATED CONFIDENCE, HOWEVER, THAT IN THE END THE CAMBODIANS WILL BE ABLE TO RESIST AND HE SINCERELY BELIEVES THAT THE ENEMY, IN SPITE OF HIS APPARENT TEMPORARY SUCCESSES, IS EXPERIENCING SERIOUS MORALE AND LOGISTICAL DIFFICULTIES. HE SEEMS TO KNOW THAT FANK DOES NOT HAVE THE MILITARY POWER TO CREATE AN IMMEDIATE AND SPECTACULAR DRIVE AGAINST THE ENEMY FORCES IN THE SECTOR OF ROUTE 6 AND 7, BUT HE BELIEVES THE ENEMY IS COMMITTED THERE, VULNERABLE AT THIS TIME, AND COULD BE DEALT A SEVERE BLOW IF ALL CONCERNED CO-OPERATED TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE.

9. WITHOUT ANY EVIDENCE OF PANIC OR DISTRESS, LON NOL WAS ASKING FOR HELP IN A SITUATION WHICH, BECAUSE OF PAUCITY OF RESOURCES, HE IS SIMPLY UNABLE TO APPLY THE NECESSARY PRESSURES TO CORRECT A RATHER SERIOUS SITUATION. IN OUR JUDGMENT, AN ARVN DIVERSIONARY ACTION DIRECTLY RELATED TO ROUTE 7 AREA WOULD HELP TO ALLEVIATE POTENTIAL ENEMY PRESSURE ON KOMPONG CHAM AND CHENLA COLUMN (SEE SEPTEL FOR ASSESSMENT OF KOMPONG CHAM SITUATION).
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